

GP Enhanced Access Service (EAS)

Website Information for Patients

Healthwatch Barnet became aware that the information explaining the new GP Enhanced Access Service given on some GP practice websites, was not consistent and available for all patients via all of the websites. Many patients we spoke to were either not aware of the service or confused about it. We therefore researched all 52 websites in the Borough to explore the information provided.

Background Information

In November 2016, Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissioned the Barnet GP Federation¹ to provide a new service providing 38,000 extra GP appointments in Barnet in the next year. The additional appointments are designed to ease the pressure on existing GP services and are available on weekday evenings between 6.30pm and 8.00pm and at weekends and bank holidays between the hours of 8am and 8pm. Appointments are bookable via a dedicated phone line, via a patient's own practice when they are open, and via NHS 111. Appointments are located at one of a number of 'Hub' locations across Barnet, with patients allocated an appointment at the most convenient location available.

Whilst these appointments have been welcomed, and an awareness-raising campaign took place initially to inform people about them, details of how to book appointments is not available consistently across all of the practice websites, and thus, the service is not clear to patients looking for information.

What we did

Healthwatch Barnet developed a series of questions to identify the location and type of information on each practice website.

All practices are required to have a website. There are 56 individual GP practices in Barnet: 3 practices share one website; 2 share another; and one practice has no website. The practice with no website was not included in this research. However, we are concerned that these patients will not be able to access any information online about their service, other than that shown on NHS Choices.

The sites were interrogated by Healthwatch Barnet volunteers, who undertook 52 reviews which were then checked by a staff member for consistency. The research was carried out in May 2018.

¹ A GP federation is a group of **general practice surgeries and practices** coming together to form an organisation which can provide high quality services to the local area, improving patient care, and supporting and offering sustainability to Practices through the challenges facing general Practice. Practices remain independent but work collaboratively sharing resources to improve day-to-day functioning and patient care.

What we found

35 practice websites (67%) had **some information** about the service available.

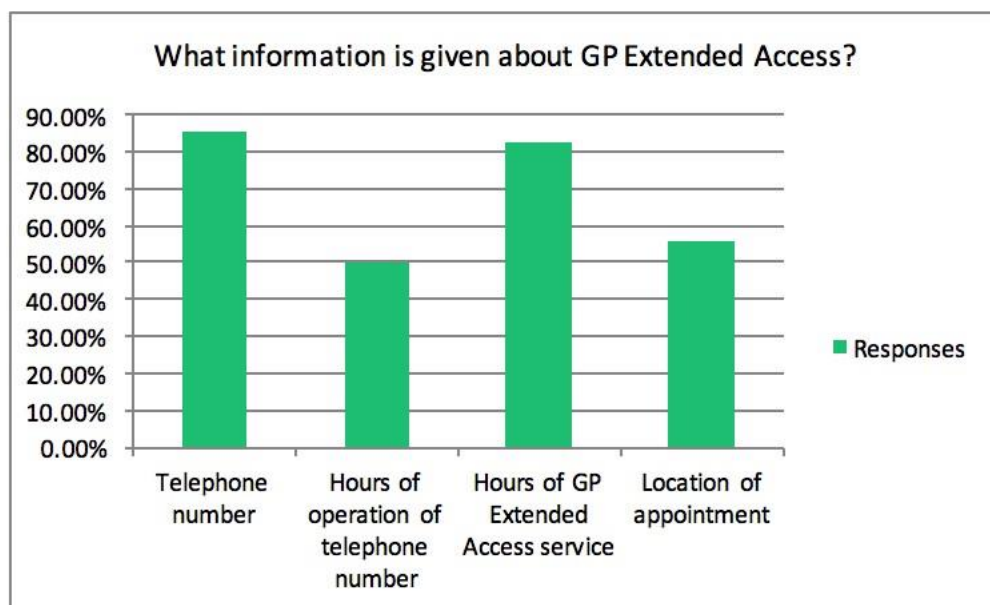
17 practice websites (33%) had **no information** about the service available.

Ease of access to the information

Of the 35 websites that presented some information, we assessed how easy it was to find the information by the number of clicks that were required to locate it.

| | Number of websites | Percentage |
|---|--------------------|------------|
| Very Easy – information on Home page | 14 | 40% |
| Easy – identified on Home page and 1 click to access. | 6 | 17% |
| Fairly Easy – identified on Home page and 2 or more clicks required to access | 8 | 23% |
| Difficult – search of whole website needed to locate information | 7 | 20% |

We investigated the information about the service that was presented on each of these 35 websites. The information found is presented below:



The websites which used the CCG's GP Enhanced Access publicity gave clear and accurate details about the service (see **appendix 1**). The practices which promoted this on their Home page gave the clearest information to their patients.

Telephone number

In particular, it was concerning that 15% of practices did not have the dedicated telephone number available which is the main method of contacting the service out of hours.

We also felt that it would be necessary to expand the method of contact in the near future to accommodate a wider range of patients, such as those who are not able to use the telephone due to hearing impairments.

Telephone hours of operation

50% gave information about when the booking telephone line is in operation. The method of booking depends on the time of day, and the dedicated telephone line is only open when the practices are closed. It would therefore be helpful for all websites to have information on the hours when telephone booking is available.

Accuracy of information

We cross-checked the information presented on the websites with that available on the CCG website and found that 40% of the sites had at least one inaccuracy in the information. For example, incorrect hours of operation.

Additional and useful information

Some sites gave some useful additional information such as explaining that the health professional will have access to medical notes.

Inconsistent terminology

One of the other concerns that we picked up was about the name of the service. We have heard anecdotally that people are quite confused about the difference between the 'GP Enhanced Access' service, 'Out of Hours' service and other services locally, so it is very important that this service is clearly described. Through this exercise, we found nine different names for the service. It would be helpful to have one title for the service which is consistently used across the Borough (informs Recommendation 1).

Recommendations

1. To ensure that the service name of 'Enhanced Access service' is explained and used consistently.
2. Ensure that reference is made to the service on the Home page of all websites, and link to the further information.
3. GP practices use material that has been written and designed centrally to ensure accuracy
4. Introduce a method to book appointments which patients with hearing impairments can use.
5. Where GP practices are not using centrally-produced material, ensure that all practice websites are promoting the service by using the same standard information which covers all of the following aspects:
 - consistent name of service,
 - opening hours of service,

- opening hours of telephone line,
- telephone number (and in future any other methods of contact),
 - some explanation of the hub locations i.e. appointments are not necessarily own GP location

Response from Barnet Federation

Barnet Federation would like to thank Healthwatch for their work researching and sharing their findings and making recommendations so comprehensively. The Enhanced Access service, (EAS), has been well received by patients in Barnet and is fully utilised. This service is underpinned by robust Clinical Governance Systems which monitor performance and ensure we provide high quality care to our patients. This evolving service in addition to working with NHS111, now provides general nursing services and we intend to expand our workforce to include other Health professionals and agencies in the future.

Patients are at the heart of all we do. Currently we are maintaining a 95% positive patient satisfaction feedback on this service at all hubs. We value the recommendations this report has made and welcome the opportunity to address them, to ensure all patients are able to receive accurate and up to date information about not only this service but all services provided by the Federation.

If you would like to more about the work the Federation is doing please visit our website www.barnetfederatedgps.org.uk

Response from Barnet CCG

Barnet CCG thank Healthwatch Barnet for this useful and constructive report. We endorse the recommendations and will work to ensure the improvements are made.

Appendix 1: Barnet GP Enhanced Access Service Publicity

**Barnet**
Federated GPs

**NHS**
Barnet
Clinical Commissioning Group

New evening and weekend GP appointments in Barnet



Extra GP appointments are available in the evenings and on weekends in Barnet. These extended hours – 6.30pm to 8.00pm on weekdays, 8.00am to 8.00pm on weekends – are provided from several GP practices (hubs) in the borough.

How do I book an appointment?

You can book an appointment with a GP or nurse at any one of the hubs by either:

- calling the service directly on **020 3948 6809** (available during hub operating hours only), or
- contacting your own GP practice.

Who can access these services?

Any patients registered with a Barnet GP practice.

What are the opening times?

Mondays to Fridays:
6.30pm to 8.00pm

Weekends and bank holidays:
8.00am to 8.00pm

 **Call 020 3948 6809 to book your appointment**

If you need medical help quickly – but not in a 999 emergency – call NHS 111 for more information on which health professional you should see.